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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
MAY 14 1970

DATE: 5/11/70

FROM : Amembassy GUATEMALA

SUBJECT : INTERNAL SECURITY: Monthly Report of Incidents, April 1970

REF : DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/PROCT 198
REVIEWED BY Eay DATE 198
SUMMARY: PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

The recrudescence of counter terror and the response it has provoked from the left which adds a new dimension to the climate of political violence in Guatemala and further endangers the official American community were the major developments during the month of April in the internal security field. In numerical terms, the number of incidents of politically-related violence actually declined (see enclosed graph). This, perhaps was a result of the State of Siege and the preoccupation of the FAR (Rebel Armed Forces) with self-analysis after the von Spreti murder on April 5. Despite the generally lower level of activity both the right and the left managed to credit a number of murders to their side of the violence ledger. The State of Siege died a quiet death at month's end which was much in keeping with its quiet life.

* * * * *

1. Ojo Por Ojo (Eye for Eye) is the biblical name of an otherwise unholy group of extreme rightists who committed three, possibly four, torture-murders in the month of April and three, possibly more, in the first week of May.

On April 8 the strangled body of Cesar MONTENEGRO Paniagua, the President's first cousin, Arbenz era PGT member, and labor leader, was found near Guatemala City. Though the murder resembled later Ojo por Ojo killings, the absence of an accusatory death note, found on the later victims, prevents Montenegro's death from being classified as the Ojo's first assassination

Enclosure:

Chart of Incidents

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Drafted by:

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(Guatemala 1278). No similar doubt exists, however, concerning the three bodies located in rapid succession in the last week of the month. On April 26, the body of Francisco BARRENO Juarez was found near the city. Attached to it was a note accusing him of being a member of the FAR, the PGT, and of traveling to Russia and Cuba (Guatemala 1546). The note was signed Ojo por Ojo and had an eye drawn on it. A similar note and message was found on the body of Eligio RODAS Ochoa which turned up the next day also near the city. He had been taken a few days earlier from his home in Coatepeque, Quezaltenango. His note also accused him of taking part in an ambush murder of an army lieutenant in San Marcos in late December 1969. 31/

[REDACTED] By far the most newsworthy of Ojo's assassinations to date was that of Julio Cesar DE LA ROCA on April 28. [REDACTED] 31/

[REDACTED] He was also a distinguished and well-known citizen of Quezaltenango. As director of the Casa de Cultura, the city library, member of the Lion's Club, etc., his death at the hands of Ojo raised the ire and indignation of the community and his funeral was a massive affair (Guatemala 1611). In the first week of May three (press reports vary) more bodies with Ojo death notes have been found (Guatemala 1670). [REDACTED] 31/

COMMENT: Those in the Ojo por Ojo movement probably feel that such extra-legal assassinations are an inevitability in Guatemala, and that whatever onus of responsibility results from such activity should fall at least in part on outgoing President Mendez rather than entirely on Arana after his July 1 inauguration. That Mendez' lame duck government is propelled primarily by a desire not to roil the waters and to leave office unscathed reinforces the Ojo por Ojo commitment to act now. [REDACTED] 31/

Of the Ojo victims to date, none can be identified by the Embassy as a significant figure on the Guatemalan left much less the actively militant subversive left. Rodas may have been a guerrilla, as might one of those killed in the first week of May, but counter-terror appears an ineffective tool in finding the guerrilla lefts' big men. Indeed their actions only serve to raise the level of general tension and terror.

The public response to de la Roca's death bears some comment. In addition to the civic outpouring of indignation and grief in Quezaltenango, his murder served to trigger responses which gave interesting insight into the almost paranoid nature of many segments of the Guatemalan polity. Because he was a correspondent for LA NACION, newspapermen, especially those in Quezaltenango, viewed his death as a threat against them. Because he was a member of the Christian Democratic party (DCG), that party saw his murder as directed towards their membership. Some intellectuals fear a campaign of know-nothingism starting against them. De la Roca's death awakened fear in many who had been lulled asleep by the absence of significant Rightist terror in the past two years, and the tensions aroused will not soon be set to rest again. [REDACTED]

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2. Count von Spreti's murder on April 5 after being held in custody by the FAR since his March 31 capture has been reported on only elsewhere. [REDACTED]

3. The State of Siege ended quietly at midnight on May 1. Imposed for thirty days after the kidnapping of von Spreti, it was allowed to expire by the GOG at its appointed time. During its tenure all security forces in the country were placed under the control of the Army which was given the right to search houses without warrants and arrest and hold people incommunicado. As previous reporting has indicated, not a great number were arrested. Shortly after the State of Siege began, two men were killed in Quezaltenango when they did not stop on demand. The police claimed that the two had opened fire on their station. Other than that incident, there was relatively little violence associated with the State of Siege.

COMMENT: Roadblocks and house searches might have had a harassing effect upon the guerrillas and thus might have contributed to the decline of activity within Guatemala City. However, for the most part, the State of Siege was not used aggressively by the Mendez government to root out the guerrilla elements. It is problematic whether the State of Siege approach with its inherent wide net tactics is an appropriate way of catching the slippery fish of a terrorist movement.

4. The kidnapping of wealthy businessman Rudy WEISSEMBERG Martinez on the 23rd and his reappearance three days later still remains shrouded in mystery. Weissenberg has publicly refused to comment on the event, and indeed his family has denied it ever occurred. The Guatemalan press, not to be outdone by silence, has speculated that his freedom cost anywhere from 150,000 to 500,000 Quetzales (Guatemala 1526, 1545).

COMMENT: Though there is certainly no positive information that would accuse one or another of the clandestine leftist organizations for the kidnapping, in motive and execution, the Weissenberg caper was very reminiscent of Gabriel Biguria's high ransom job early in March. Biguria was kidnapped by the PGT-FAR.

5. Acting on information radioed to them only a few minutes before, a police patrol car intercepted a stolen Colgate-Palmolive panel truck in Zone 10 of the City on the morning of April 21. A firefight ensued leaving in its wake two dead guerrillas. The dead, who were buried unidentified, were heavily armed and had in their possession hand grenades. One or two other accomplices (press reports vary) escaped (Guatemala 1473). One unconfirmed press account reported a wounded youth captured in the vicinity of the shootout.

6. There were attempts on the life of two individuals associated with the Right in Guatemala City--one successful. On April 15, Oswaldo PINEDA Lee, bodyguard and chauffeur to MLM party chieftain Mario SANDOVAL Alarcon was gunned down as he left his home early in the morning

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(Guatemala 1399). [REDACTED] Two weeks later an attempt was made on the life of retired Treasury Police official and, according to the press, current Arana intimate and security adviser, Justo RODRIGUEZ Diaz. He was seriously wounded when his car was attacked. One other man was killed in the shootout. A youth was captured near the scene of the crime and has been formally charged (Guatemala 1611).

7. While the level of activity fell in the city, that in the countryside remained relatively constant. In the usually quiet highlands region, an MLN party leader, Jorge Antonio GARCIA Rivera, was murdered from ambush in Cubulco, Baja Verapaz on April 13 (Guatemala 1399). In the Eastern region three unidentified bodies showed up in Ipala, Chiquimula. Two men were killed in Zacapa on the 18th and 19th, according to one press report, by men dressed in army uniforms. A few days later two more were murdered from ambush in the same Department. Bodies also turned up in Jutiapa and Jalapa may have been the results of political vendettas. On the South Coast, two policemen were wounded when fired upon from a stolen truck which ran a police checkpoint. A twenty-four year old was found murdered near Tiquisate, Escuintla on the 9th. He had been tortured before being killed. A few days earlier another man was killed in Taxisco, Escuintla after his family could not or would not come up with the 500 Quetzales his captors, identifying themselves as FAR members, had demanded. The police announced they captured the leader of a band of about fifteen men in the same department on the 13th who had been using the FAR's name to extort money from wealthy farmers. The using of terrorist organizations' names by common criminals for extortionary purposes is not uncommon and during this reporting period at least four such cases were reported both in Guatemala City and the countryside, particularly in the volatile San Marcos region. This month saw at least five corpses show up there. According to one newspaper, three found together had notes pinned to their chests but State of Siege press censorship made it impossible to print the contents. Guerrilla literature was reported to have been found on the bodies of two others. At the end of the month the press reported that a band of ten to fifteen guerrillas had been captured in Malacatan, San Marcos, but the army denied knowledge of the alleged capture. Similarly, a successfully repelled guerrilla attack on the MonOil camp at Las Tortugas reported by the army's public relations office, also proved false (Guatemala 1473).

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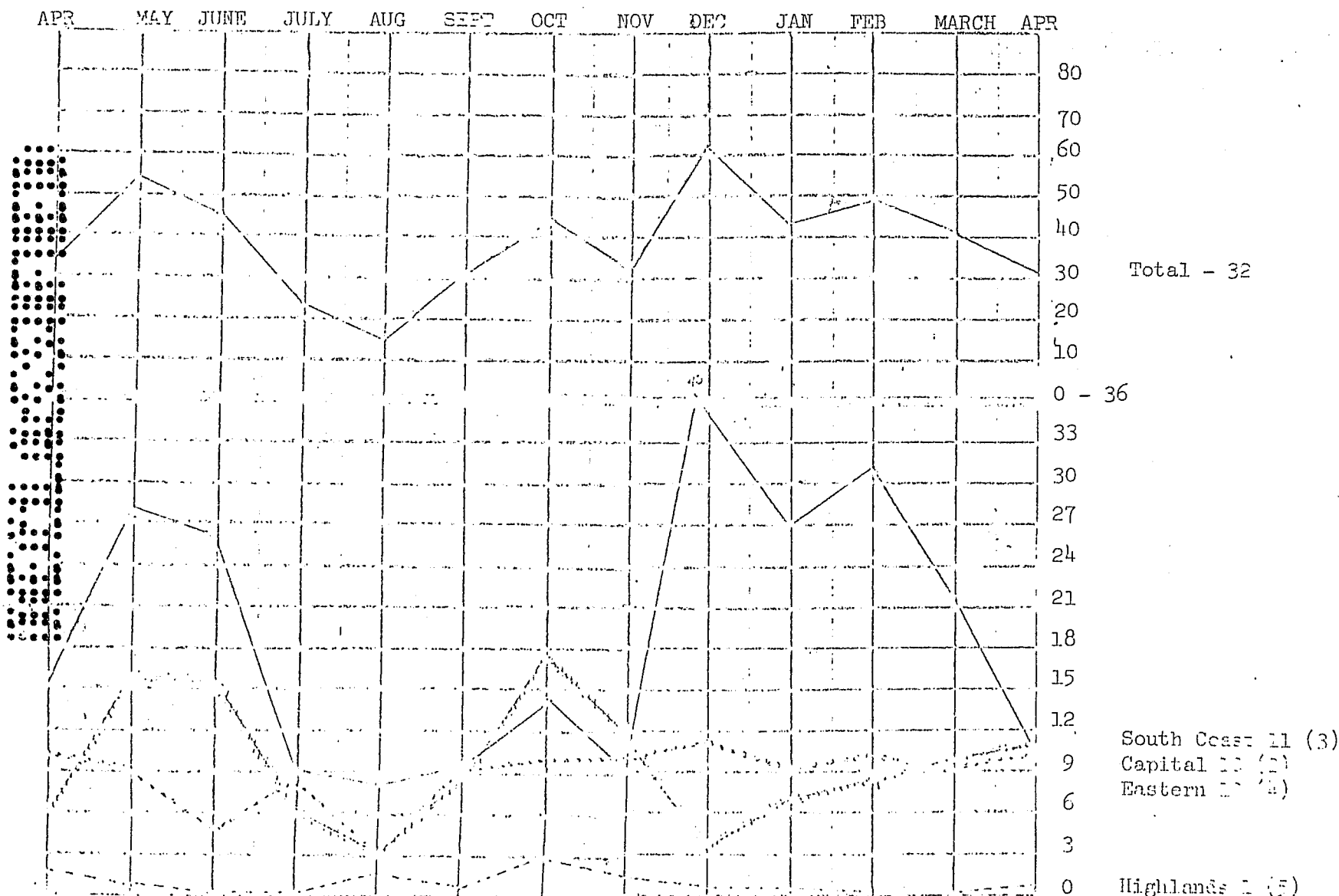
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MONTHLY FREQUENCY OF TERRORIST RELATED INCIDENTS BY REGION (1) - APRIL 1969 - APRIL 1970



- (1) For purposes of this graph, acts of violence include shootings, bombings, and assassinated bodies
- (2) Capital Area: Sacatepequez, Guatemala
- (3) South Coast: San Marcos, Quezaltenango, Retalhuleu, Suchitepequez, Escuintla, Santa Rosa
- (4) Eastern Region: Jutiapa, El Progreso, Jalapa, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Izabal
- (5) Highlands: Totonicapan, Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, El Quiché, Baja Verapaz, Solola

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